

YELLOWSTONE VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER, INC.

Volunteer Program

Volunteers are the lifeblood of YVAS. There will never be enough staff, never enough dollars to hire more staff, and always more needs than paid human resources. That is where volunteers come in and make the difference between success and failure and, for the animals, life and death.

As the program develops and expands, volunteer services will be needed for many important shelter tasks broken down into two types: "in shelter" and "out of shelter." (In shelter volunteering requires a specific shift and time commitment.)

All volunteers must participate in Volunteer Orientation and Animal Handling Training prior to assignment.

In-shelter Volunteering

These volunteer positions support day-to-day operations. These positions mainly have contact with the animals and with visitors. Options for volunteering in the shelter include, but are not limited to, the following positions:

Greeter

These volunteers are responsible for assisting the administrative staff during open shelter hours. Volunteer greeters will help staff administer "Meet Your Match" surveys, answer customers' questions, and assist with the adoption application process. This position requires some job specific training from the administrative division.

Administrative Volunteer

These volunteers will be responsible for upkeep of many aspects of our administrative division. Volunteers will write thank you letters to donors and individuals who adopt animals, follow up with adopters, follow up with citizens who have filed lost or found reports, enter dog license data into computers, check for potential matches, pre-write adoption contracts for individuals finalizing adoptions, stuff envelopes, prepare adoption packages, and do miscellaneous filing and copying. Experience necessary for this position includes customer service experience and participation in a Volunteer Orientation. Some of these activities may be performed off-site provided volunteer has access to a computer and the Internet.

Adoption Desk Support

Volunteers provide clerical support for the staff at the front desk. This includes answering the telephones, completing adoption paperwork, and providing general animal care information to the public. Computer knowledge is helpful and good customer service skills are a must.

Web Site Volunteer

Web photographers are responsible for taking digital pictures of dogs, cats, and other adoptable animals for our website. The website is a good resource for the Yellowstone Valley Animal

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Shelter to promote its available pets. These individuals will also be able to update the pictures and descriptions of the animals. Patience is a must for this volunteer position as it can be challenging to get a suitable picture of any animal. Web photographers are responsible for removing the animal from its cage or kennel, maintaining control over the animal, and putting the animal back in its cage or kennel after the photo session. Experience necessary for this position includes good writing skills. All other training will be provided including how to use a digital camera, and website design and updating.

Small Animal Friend

These volunteers will cuddle, pet, play with, and give attention to the shelter's adoptable small animals (i.e. gerbils, hamsters, rabbits, rats, guinea pigs). Such activities will comfort the small animals as they wait for a new home. The volunteers are responsible for removing the animal from its cage, maintaining control over the animal, and putting the animal back in its cage.

Cat Cuddler

Volunteer cat cuddlers are responsible for improving the quality of life of the adoptable cats at the Yellowstone Valley Animal Shelter. They can cuddle, play with, groom, and give attention and affection to cats during their stay, making them more comfortable on the adoption floor. Cat cuddlers are responsible for removing the cat from its kennel, safe handling of the cat, and putting the cat back in its kennel.

Dog Groomer

Groomer volunteers are responsible for washing and grooming adoptable dogs to improve their chances for a new home. These individuals will use the tub room facility at the shelter for bathing. Groomers are responsible for removing the animal from its kennel, maintaining control over the animal during bathing and grooming, and putting the animal back in its kennel upon completion. Volunteers for this position must be able to lift heavy animals. Experience necessary for this position includes previous grooming experience.

Dog Walker

Volunteer dog walkers will take adoptable dogs for walks. These outings serve to exercise, socialize, and keep dogs in good mental health during their stay at the shelter. Walkers will be trained in acceptable methods of basic command training (sit, stay, down, etc.). Walkers are responsible for leashing the dog, removing the dog from its kennel, maintaining control over the dog for the entire walk, and putting the dog back in its kennel.

Run with Fido

Are you a college student that wants to run with a dog? Are you unable to have a dog because of your living situation but would like to run with Fido? Then this may be the program for you. The shelter often has dogs that need extra exercise. If you like the idea of taking a dog out for a run, please consider this program.

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Behavior Modification

From time to time animals enter the shelter in need of an extra bit of attention to become the great animal they are capable of being but for someone spending extra time with them. Volunteers may teach a dog to walk nicely on lead, teach a dog not to bark, or teach a cat to use the litter box. Some of these animals may require a volunteer to invite the animal to live with them for a short period of time.

Kennel Cleaner

Primarily responsible for helping the staff clean and feed the animals in the morning and helping to keep the animals clean and comfortable throughout the day. Yellowstone Valley Animal Shelter maintains a continuous cleaning regime. This makes the shelter more inviting for the public by reducing the smell and sight of animal waste and provides a healthy environment for the animals.

Out of Shelter Volunteering

Out of shelter volunteering opportunities do not necessarily require a shift or time commitment. Options for volunteering outside the shelter include the following positions:

Foster Care Program

Be a hero. Save a life! Fostering can be an excellent family project. It is an intense, short-term commitment. If your lifestyle does not permit you to have an animal full time, here is a rewarding opportunity for you. YVAS needs families or individuals who are willing to offer their home on a temporary basis to animals in need. Foster care is most frequently needed for animals that are too young to be adopted.

Public Relations

Help us reach out to donors, veterinarian partners, and interested pet owners with press releases, newsletters, flyers, and promotional materials for special events. This is a great opportunity for college marketing or public relations students.

Grant Writing

Grant writers are a vital part of any nonprofit agency. Our grant writers will seek out and apply for grants to support and help expand our programs. Experienced grant writers are needed. If you are interested in this volunteer position but lack experience, we may be able to team you up with a mentor who is an experienced grant writer.

Off-Site Adoptions

Periodically, shelter and foster animals are taken to various locations around the City where they are made available for adoption. These events are organized and staffed by volunteers who help setup/take down the tables and cages and assist potential adopters.

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Adoption Follow-up Calls

Volunteers help call past adopters and inquire how the adopted animal is adjusting to his or her new home and about their adoption experience at the shelter. These telephone calls can be made during shelter hours, but are most useful evenings and weekends.

Special Event Committee Volunteer

Help out with our special events and fundraisers! Raising the many thousands of dollars necessary to continue operations every year is a massive undertaking requiring dedicated volunteers. Attend and brainstorm at meetings, help with invitations/publicity/exposure, and manage/coordinate specific functions. Volunteers need to be able to get along with others and work in a team environment with firm deadlines and responsibilities. You must be responsible and reliable!

Public Education Team (P.E.T.)

P.E.T. volunteers will participate in various special events in which the Yellowstone Valley Animal Shelter is involved. These events are unique ways that the shelter can educate the public about animal welfare and promote its adoptable animals. The P.E.T. volunteers will perform a variety of tasks, including, but not limited to: customer service, animal handling, setting up booths, running booths, and helping shelter staff.

Qualifications for a Volunteer Position

All volunteers must be at least 16 years of age, although not all positions may be available to those under 18. Reliable transportation to the shelter is a must. The agency requires a minimum of 1 to 3 hours per week, depending upon the volunteer position. There is some flexibility in scheduling, but volunteers should plan on at least 10 hours per month, at a minimum, for three months.

All volunteers are expected to support and promote the goals of YVAS and abide by all volunteer rules and regulations.

A special note for foster program volunteers: A volunteer foster program can be an ideal low cost way to greatly increase the number of lives a shelter can save while at the same time providing an opportunity for community members to volunteer. Not only does a foster program maximize the number of animals rescued, it allows an organization to care for animals that would be difficult to care for in a shelter environment: orphaned or feral kittens, sick or injured animals, or dogs needing one-on-one behavior rehabilitation. For animals that may need a break from the shelter environment, foster care provides a comfortable home setting that keeps animals happy and healthy. Foster parents will be required to attend an orientation, sign a waiver, and abide by staff requests for follow-up visits, and date for return of the animal. Home visits may also be required.